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## BOOK REVIEWS.

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### SOME RECENT SPANISH GRAMMARS.

*A Spanish Grammar.* By M. M. RAMSEY. New York : Henry Holt & Co.  
Pp. 525 (grammar and exercises); 527-610 (vocabulary and index).

THIS book purports to be an abridgment, with a readjustment in the proportion of certain parts, of the author's well-known *Text-Book of Modern Spanish*. We learned with much satisfaction the author's intention of bringing out an abridged edition of his large work. There is a crying need for a brief course from a scholarly and authoritative source, and we felt confident that Professor Ramsey's *Text-Book* contained all the materials from which a very successful brief course could be constructed. We confess to a good deal of disappointment in the results. The new volume contains hardly fifty pages less than the old—a reduction that is inappreciable in a work of such large dimensions. Part II, called "Preliminary Lessons," was the particularly successful feature of the older volume and is the most practicable part of the new one. It abandoned the traditional scheme of Græco-Latin grammars, from the example of which, in most of our modern-language grammars, the old-time sequence of the parts of speech is observed with an air of superstitious reverence. It made the introduction into the study of the language rationally topical, each lesson of the twenty composing the division dealing with some special subject. By this means the essential beginning ideas of each part of speech were presented to the learner in the order of importance characterizing the needs of a living language. We think this principle is the only rational one in modern-language study, although individual ideas will vary greatly in the working out of details.

In the revised edition the author has considerably worked over and rearranged the original second (introductory) part, although its length remains the same—about a hundred pages. The remaining two parts, "Complementary Treatment" (Part III) and "Synopsis of Forms," comprise about 350 and 75 pages respectively. The third completes very fully the matter treated in the second. Yet we think the book would have had its practical value greatly increased if the second, or introductory, part had been enlarged at various points by the incorporation of some material from the subsequent large one, so that it could have stood alone, if desired, in its function of furnishing the learner all the practical grammar he requires for entering actively upon early reading. This might have been accomplished by more evenness of proportion between the two parts, whereby the former would have acquired a greater unity and completeness as a compendious introduction into the language.

In the preface to his older edition the author states that he "believes that exercises, to test the student's progress at every step, and give opportunity to practice what he has learned, are among the most important agencies in education, and ought never to be evaded." The writer heartily indorses this thought and is glad to see it put into effect by the copious exercises, usually well selected, that accompany the new volume as well as its predecessor. This feature is a natural outcome of the wealth of

idiomatic illustrative sentences given for each grammatical principle presented, in itself one of the most valuable characteristics of the old work as well as of the new. But when practical exercises for all forms of inflections are desired at any cost, some puerilities are perhaps inevitable, as *verbi gracia*, Ex. IV, sentence 11: “¿*Quiere el burro también té y azúcar?* (Does the *donkey* wish likewise tea and sugar?)” It is true that petted animals are sometimes, it is said, regaled with gratuities of sugar, but tea . . . ?

The book is creditably free from such ethnographical affinities, however, as such the traditional samples of linguistic bulls, like the following: “Has the baker our bread? No, but he has our fine asses;” or, “Have you seen the red cow of the sick general’s wife? No, but I have seen the fierce dog of your mother-in-law;” or, “The Italian shoemaker has purchased an Egyptian antelope from the Andalusian merchant;” or, “The professor has pulled the under jaw of the hen (*i. e.*, its teeth?);” and other like curiosities in good repute. This inanity has so discredited the simple but indispensable auxiliaries of language study as to drive teachers to the other extreme, and to give an impetus to distressingly learned forms of grammatical exposition from which composition is banished altogether or made as artificial as the former system was ridiculous. Our author, far from falling characteristically into such slips as the example cited, errs in the other extreme—as if conscious of the older danger to be avoided—and too often sets the student exercises that are bewildering and discouraging for their heavy academic flavor. *E. g.* (p. 116), “Hydrofluoric acid possesses the remarkable property of attacking glass, etc.,” or (p. 134), “The beautiful phenomenon of the rainbow is produced by the decomposition which the light of the sun undergoes when it is reflected by the drops of water of a cloud that has been condensed into rain;” and this from a student who quite likely is unable to ask for a glass of water in the idiom he is learning. Such a style of composition, apart from having no practical value for the learner, has the further disadvantage of requiring the introduction of a burdensome vocabulary in quantity and quality, and one as well fitted for a practical purpose as the use of a steam-hammer for crushing egg shells. With certain exercise (*e. g.*, xxii and xxv) the impression is that new and strange terms roll in by the hundred. Small wonder if the student is sometimes disheartened in the presence of such a lexicographical landslide, which is no sooner painfully cleaned up than another tumbles down into its place. Yet, in spite of these defects, the new grammar is incontestibly one of the most important works of its class in the field, and one so uniformly accurate and well arranged that it claims our warm indorsement.

*A Spanish Grammar.* By SAMUEL GARNER. American Book Co., 1901. Pp. 291 (grammar and exercises); 292–346 (readings), 347–415, (vocabulary and index).

THIS is one of the best of the grammars projected along the time-honored, albeit somewhat outworn, lines of the dead-language grammars, which begin scrupulously with articles, continuing systematically through to verbs and beyond, and finishing up with “syntax.” Many teachers prefer such a system of linguistic exposition which imposes—if it do not discourage—by a thorough and methodic air that inspires confidence. The grave defect of such a scheme, as hinted in the preceding notice, is that it delays reading, and the lively student interest that comes from such an exercise, by postponing to the last the things of prime importance and difficulty which, in some